

just be giving it by way of a grant, but if it is public money the government should be taking out equity to the tune and proportion of the grant being given so that in the end we will own the proportion of the plant we are paying for, and so that we are not being Santa Claus with public money. If we are going to use public money we should have something to show the public in years to come as a result of the investment taxpayers of this country will have made.

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, as we move to extend the authority of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion under the Regional Development Incentives Act, it is time to reflect, as some of my colleagues and the leader of my party have, on the approach used by the government in its attempt to equalize opportunities in this country for all Canadians, regardless of the area and the region in which they may reside.

The Department of Regional Economic Expansion has quite a history, a history of success and a history of failure. My colleagues—and I will take the same liberty—have spoken about their own particular areas with regard to regional economic expansion, and coming from British Columbia I have much to talk about—

Mr. Nystrom: Including a good government.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Despite the government.

Mr. Oberle:—not because so much has happened as a result of the presence of the department, but because so little has happened in the province of British Columbia. While the fault is not entirely with the federal ministry or with my colleagues in this House, some of the blame can justifiably be directed at the government in British Columbia.

The Regional Development Incentives Act does provide that the provincial governments have to co-ordinate their efforts with those of the federal government, and this has not, in all areas at all times, been possible to achieve, particularly in British Columbia. Because the act is so linked to political expediency, a number of politicians have used it to their own advantage.

When the act was first implemented, the previous administration designated an area in British Columbia, namely, the Okanagan Valley, because that is where the premier as well as some of the key ministers of that administration came from, and we industrialized an area which really did not need industrialization. As the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) said, not all areas in our country require the same consideration. It was the case in the Okanagan Valley that we used some of the most productive and beautiful farm land to build factories and truck plants to stimulate the economy there, which really did not need it at that time.

This area did not need to be stimulated to the extent other areas needed it, and the potential of other areas was not recognized.

One of the big concerns I always had about the early stages of the act was that it was really only possible for large corporations or big businesses to take advantage of it. The reason was that the decision making process was

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highly centralized in that it took an army of consultants and engineers, and much political patronage, to achieve approval of a program. Proctor and Gamble, for instance, received \$12 million to establish a pulp mill in Grande Prairie, in northern Alberta. While there is nothing wrong with establishing a pulp mill in northern Alberta, there were other areas which needed that kind of development.

Mr. Baldwin: You are talking about the constituency I love.

Mr. Oberle: I had not noticed that my hon. friend, the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), is sitting right in front of me. The wrath of God will probably strike me.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Not to mention lightning.

Mr. Oberle: I should approach the question of the pulp mill in Grande Prairie with caution. It certainly has done a lot in that area. It has diversified opportunity for the business community.

Mr. Baldwin: Great speech.

Mr. Oberle: I probably could also say that it was because of my hon. colleague in the House of Commons that that particular company was able to carry out that program there. Naturally, what will have to happen in Grande Prairie and in some of these areas where large resource industries have been placed as a result of regional economic expansion is that there will have to be a challenge to make the program conducive to the aims and ambitions of secondary industrial plants, and certain changes will have to be made in the act over the years to make it possible for small firms to apply. It is very difficult for them to cut through the bureaucracy, and even after decentralization and the establishment of regional offices in Vancouver, Moncton, and throughout the country, decisions are still made in Ottawa.

We still must depend on the development strategy of the provincial governments, and they are still not co-ordinated with other departments of government. My leader has adequately described what happens when the Department of Regional Economic Expansion moves into one area and other departments of government concentrate their efforts in some other region. It has often occurred to me that it would be better to spend our money providing areas of low growth and areas with depressed economies with the means to establish their infrastructure, transportation facilities and access to resources. This is a very serious consideration particularly in northern British Columbia and northern Alberta.

It simply does not make sense to move into an area and to establish a great big industry without answering some of these very important questions, not just in the area of transportation, but also in the area of the quality of life of the people who move to these regions which have the resource potential to be developed, and thus in the area of the infrastructure to support the quality of life Canadians have a right to expect. I am talking about infrastructure connected to smaller communities which have to be estab-